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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 000199

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EUN](#) [YI](#) [MW](#) [SR](#) [BK](#) [BO](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [KPAL](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: CZECHS ON FEB 27 GAERC

REF: A. STATE 25937

[1](#)B. PRAGUE 0068

Classified By: A/DCM Martin Hohe for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. At the February 27 GAERC, the top priorities will be the Balkans, the Middle East, and Belarus. The Czechs stress the importance of observing international standards in Kosovo, and of managing the impact in Belgrade of any permanent solution for Kosovo. The Czechs strongly support U.S. positions on Iran and Hamas, and support a EU trade mission to Iraq. On Belarus, the Czechs support sanctions against the regime elite. They also regard opposition leader Milinkevich to be a skilled interlocutor. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Poloffs met February 21 with Petr Kaiser, Director of the Czech MFA's Common Foreign and Security Policy Department, to deliver reftel A talking points and to discuss February 27 GAERC. The discussion focused on the Balkans, the Middle East, Belarus, and Congo.

The Balkans

[1](#)3. (C) On the Balkans generally, Kaiser said the Western Balkans will be first priority at the Gymnich meeting of EU Foreign Ministers in Salzburg March 10-11.

[1](#)4. (C) On Kosovo, the Czechs stress the importance of observing international standards, noting that minority rights must be protected for the Roma as well as the Serbs. The Czechs agree with the approach of UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari, namely that Kosovo must address basic problems, such as human rights issues (including protection of minority rights, church sites, etc.), before tackling the more difficult issue of independence. Kaiser reaffirmed that the EU is still calling for complete cooperation with ICTY.

[1](#)5. (C) The Czechs continue to be concerned about the impact in Belgrade of any resolution concerning the future of Kosovo. Any outcome is likely to be seen as a defeat, with associated internal political difficulties.

[1](#)6. (C) On EU incentives, the Czechs believe that only the prospect of eventual EU membership is likely to encourage meaningful participation on both sides.

[1](#)7. (C) On Montenegro, the challenge is how to ensure participation of the opposition in the referendum. Currently,

the parties are not talking to each other directly, relying instead on shuttle diplomacy. According to Kaiser, a major problem to overcome is the opposition's belief that a 50% result will be unfair. The opposition, therefore, wants the referendum to be decided by a super majority. He noted that Belgrade has not been cooperative on the issue.

The Middle East

¶8. (C) On Iran, the Czechs completely support the U.S. position. Kaiser said that recent events only confirm the Czech's long-term view that the Iranian government cannot be trusted, and is a destabilizing influence in the region.

¶9. (C) On Iraq, the Czechs support the proposal to send an EU trade mission to Iraq. Kaiser predicts the proposal will be approved because EU member states have a strong desire to do something that will support the Iraqi people and help stabilize the political situation there.

¶10. (C) On Palestine, Czechs views remain unchanged: Hamas is still on the list of terrorist organizations, and therefore, the EU should not engage with Hamas politically unless it denounces violence. Kaiser noted that some EU member states disagree. They believe the EU must deal with Palestine because of interests there, such as the EU presence at the Rafah border crossing.

Belarus

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¶11. (C) Kaiser said support for Belarus in the EU is currently very high. There is a growing understanding and agreement that the EU must do something to help the Belarusians.

¶12. (C) The Poles and Latvians hosted meetings on Belarus on the margins of the last GAERC. At one of these meetings, Belarusian opposition leader Alexander Milinkevich spoke with 27 foreign ministers or their proxies. He was able to clearly state the situation in Belarus. According to Kaiser, Milinkevich exhibited good political instincts and the Foreign Ministers appeared very impressed.

¶13. (C) Milinkevich at that meeting acknowledged impending defeat in the coming election (a view shared by EU member states), and is no longer calling for people to go to the streets. Milinkevich claims he is not calling for a color revolution. His aim is to introduce the opposition parties to the voters, and to rebuild civil society. Kaiser observed that the civil society movement in Belarus has much in common with the Poland's Solidarity movement in the 1980s. (Note: The goal of rebuilding civil society is consistent with Czech efforts to provide capacity-building training to Belarusian civil society, ref B). Milinkevich had said his political campaign has basic needs: photocopiers, for example. He also expressed appreciation for the ERB radio project, and confirmed the strong need to counter the regime's propaganda. Notwithstanding the inaccurate information they receive, Milinkevich said the public's appreciation of the West is very high.

¶14. (C) The Czechs support harsher measures against members of the Belarusian political elite.

Congo

¶15. (C) Although the Congo is not a foreign policy priority for the Czech Republic, the Czechs maintain an Embassy there.

Kaiser said EU member states are discussing how to respond if elections become violent.
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